Applied Organizational Communication

Theory and Practice in a Global Environment

THIRD EDITION

Thomas E. Harris
University of Alabama

Mark D. Nelson
University of Alabama

Contents

Preface

Organizational communication is a fascinating subject that is constantly evolving. The second edition of this book was published in 2002 and I noted that organizations had changed substantially from the first edition. This edition reflects the significant changes since 2002 while retaining the in-depth discussions of critical organizational communication concepts. In addition, Dr. Mark Nelson has agreed to co-author this edition, making the coverage even more complete. We have added important insights concerning critical perspectives and the reader will note extensive updates, revisions, and current examples. The majority of the original chapter titles have remained, because they allow the reader to quickly access specific information. In every chapter, change, diversity, and the digital age are examined.

In addition to providing extensive resources, this text reflects my own 35 years of experience as a teacher and an organizational consultant. In organizations ranging in size from Bristol Myers Squibb, Georgia Pacific, and IBM, to local and regional volunteer groups such as the Easter Seals, I have introduced, developed, and expanded the understanding and effective utilization of applied organizational communication concepts. As the reader discovers, each chapter presents an extensive analysis of selected topics, coupled with current and broad-based research. Hopefully, my own enthusiasm for a communication approach to understanding organizations shows in every chapter. Nelson's experiences reflect my own, and our combined research and experience are reflected throughout the text.

The book unfolds in the following manner.

The first three chapters are concerned with the perspectives necessary to understand the relationship between communication and organizations. Chapter 1 grounds the text in current and future changes, explains the transactional communication perceptive, and offers a systems perspective as a viable means for understanding organizations. Chapter 2 links perception with understanding communication and organizations. Chapter 3 provides an extensive discussion of the current organizational and management theories that have set the stage for the modern organization.

Organizational communication is a complex topic. Chapter 4, on verbal communication, presents an organization's eye view of how language functions and malfunctions. Chapter 5, on nonverbal communication, draws from the broad research available and applies the relevant information to organizations. Chapter 6 focuses on networks and channels, which are the means by which individuals, groups, and organizations connect. Symbolic behavior is

examined in chapter 7, which develops the clear link between communication and organizations.

Chapter 8 is devoted to understanding listening. Chapter 9 explores interpersonal communication, and discusses transactions and problems including conflict and superior–subordinate relationships with new information on interpersonal skills development. Chapter 10 highlights how groups and teams are fundamental to any organization; this chapter has been updated to include a discussion of the contemporary approaches to group development. Chapter 11 offers the key concepts regarding leadership, including feminist perspectives on power and contemporary theories of leadership. As is fitting, new communication technologies are examined in chapter 12, which provides comprehensive insights into the benefits and challenges presented by new technologies at all levels in organizations.

This text is intended to be comprehensive, clear, interesting, current, and accessible. We have made a great effort to avoid a single, parochial view, because our consulting experiences have indicated clearly that a broad theoretical understanding is more useful to the individual and the organization. The most exciting aspect of our own careers has been the application of academic theories to actual organizational communication situations and returning to the classroom with examples to explain these theories. Throughout this text, we have tried to offer the same opportunity to the reader.

Acknowledgments